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Secretary Clinton Praises Morocco for Longstanding Partnership, Recognizes Morocco's Historic Role in Combating Piracy on High Seas

Washington, DC (April 9, 2009) – At a bilateral meeting yesterday with Moroccan Foreign Minister Dr. Taieb Fassi Fihri, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised Morocco for its "extraordinary progress" and reaffirmed America's commitment to its longstanding relationship of friendship and cooperation with the North African nation. She emphasized the need for international cooperation on security issues, such as the recent act of Somali piracy that threatened 21 American crew members, and remarked that Morocco was the first ally of the United States to offer assistance in the protection of its merchant fleet more than 200 years ago.

"Morocco was the very first country that recognized us, going back a long time," said Secretary Clinton. "We worked together to end piracy off of the coast of Morocco all those years ago, and we're going to work together to end this kind of criminal activity anywhere on the high seas."

Morocco is one of America's oldest and closest allies: in 1777, Morocco became the first country to recognize the independence of the American colonies, and the Treaty of Friendship and Peace of 1787 between the United States and Morocco remains America's longest-unbroken treaty. Morocco has long partnered with the US to build bridges between the Islamic world and the West, as well as to combat acts of terrorism in the lawless regions of the Sahara.

"We are so committed to our relationship and have very high regard for the extraordinary progress that has taken place in Morocco …and we look forward to deepening and strengthening our relationship," said Secretary Clinton.

"USA and Morocco have a longstanding relationship, and we will continue to work together to defend peace and stability, mainly in the Middle East, in Africa," said Foreign Minister Fihri. "We in Morocco really appreciate the statement made by the President and then Madame Secretary about new dialogue with Muslim countries and also how to reach the peace in the Middle East."

Morocco historically has played a significant role in the Middle East peace process, including participation in international peace conferences, hosting Israeli leaders in Morocco, and serving as an intermediary between Israel and other Arab states. His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco currently chairs the al Quds (Jerusalem) Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Secretary Clinton's expressed commitment to continue to grow the US-Moroccan relationship is consistent with the recommendations of a special report, "Why the Maghreb Matters," issued last week by a distinguished panel that includes former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Ret. General Wesley Clark and former Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat. Released by the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies and the Conflict Management Program at Johns Hopkins University, the North Africa policy paper notes a 400% spike in terrorist attacks in the region since 9/11 and advocates increases US engagement with Morocco and other North Africa nations to protect American security interests and to thwart a growing peril from al-Qaeda terrorists in the Sahara, which UN Counter-Terrorism Chief Mike Smith warns "has emerged as the world's most worrying security hotspot."

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The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org

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